(a) whether the United States has expressed its preparedness to negotiate increased access in all areas including textiles which comprises of almost 25 percent of I access in all areas including textiles which comprises of almost 25 percent of India's export to U.S. ;

(b) if so, whether United States approach towards India has improved ; and

(c) the steps being taken to improve the trade relations between the two countries ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (c). Negotiations on market access, including o textiles are being carried out in the Uruguay Round. The United States is also participating in the negotiations. The negotiations are supplemented by bilateral consultations and negotiations as and when necessary.

A new bilateral agreement between the US and India under the MFA was consulted on 22nd November, 1991 regarding access levels for India's textiles and clothing products for 1992. According to this, there will be increase in the quotas for certain products. In respect of some products certain additional flexibilities will be available which will result in increased export opportunities. It is expected that, as a result of these changes, there will be a significant increase in the access to US market during 1992.

Consultations are held between the two governments at political and official levels both bilaterally and multilaterally to address their respective concern on trade and related economic policies and to consider measures to reduce and eliminate impediments to trade and investment flows. Through the Joint Business Council, representatives of the Industries of both countries also periodically exchange views.

Repurchase of Gold from Union Bank of Switzerland

3789. SHRI R. SURENDER REDDY : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the amount taken by the Government from the Union Bank of Switzerland as per the agreement dated May 18th, 1991 for sale of gold with repurchase option; and

(b) the time by which the entire quantity of gold is proposed to be repurchased by the Government ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI RAMESHWAR THAKUR): (a) No amount has been taken by the Government from the Union Bank of Switzerland. However, State Bank of India (SBI) utilised about 20 metric tonnes of gold leased by government of India for raising foreign currency resources amounting to US$ 200.4 million vide SBI's agreement dated May 18, 1991 with Union Bank of Switzerland.

(b) The gold has already been repurchased by the State Bank of India. The Government intends to transfer this gold to the Reserve Bank of India, and thus add to our official gold reserves.

[*Translation*]

National Permit Policy for Passenger Buses

3791. SHRI RAMESHWAR PATIDAR : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to formulate a national permit policy for

passenger buses on the lines of the national permit policy for goods transport;

(b) if so, the details thereof ; and

(c) if not, the reasons there for ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) As per section 88, sub-section 9 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, the State Transport Authorities are empowered to grant permits in respect of tourist vehicles valid for the whole of India or in such contiguous states not being less than three in number including the State in which the permit is issued. However, such vehicles are required to pay in full the relevant taxes in each of the States where it operates. A scheme in respect of tourist vehicles on the pattern of the national permits for goods carriers is one of the items for discussion by the Transport Development Council in its next meeting.

Strike by lawyers in Delhi

3792. SHRI RAMASHRAY PRASAD SINGH : Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the lawyers of Delhi Courts have been on strike for the past several months;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the effective steps taken by the Government to solve the crisis ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI RANGARAJAN KUMARAMANGALAM) : (a) and (b). Yes Sir. The lawyers of the Tis Hazari Courts have been on strike demanding mainly that the pecuniary jurisdiction of the District Court should not be bifurcated.

(c) The government is of the view that the interest of the litigant public of Delhi has to be the main criterion in effecting changes and that both the proposals need to be implemented simultaneously. The Delhi High Court (Amendment) Bill, 1991 raising the pecuniary jurisdiction of District Court has been passed by the Rajya Sabha on 3rd December, 1991 and is presently under processing in the Lok Sabha. As regards the matter of decentralisation off the District Court, the same is in an advanced stage of consideration in consultation with Delhi Administration and Delhi High Court.

Customs Retail Shops Selling Confiscated Goods in Bihar

3793. SHRI RAM TAHAL CHOUDHARY : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of authorised Customs retail shops selling confascated goods in Bihar;

(b) whether the smuggled goods are also sold in unauthorised shops; and

(c) if so, the value of goods seized by the Customs authorities from shops during the year 1990 and 1991?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI RAMESHWAR THAKUR) : (a) Available reports indicate that there are 39 shops located at various places in Bihar which are authorised to sell confiscated goois in retail.

(b) and (c) : Government is aware that smuggled goods of foreign origin are being illegally sold. In Bihar alone, goods worth